DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 094 825 JC 740 281

AUTHOR	Bushnell, David S.; Kievit, Mary Bach
TITLE	Will the Real Community College Stand Up!
INSTITUTION	Human Resources Research Organization, Alexandria, Va.
REPORT NO	HumRRO-PP-11-74
PUB DATE	Jun 74
NOTE	12p.
JOURNAL CIT	Published in an abbreviated form in Change; v6 n3 Apr 1974
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS	*College Role; *Community Colleges; *Educational Change; *Enrollment Trends; Post Secondary Education; *Social Change; Technical Reports

ABSTRACT

A sampling of educators' views on community colleges is offered. Six critical forces will shape the future functions of community colleges: the continued demand for equal educational opportunities; increase in the number of 20- to 35-year-olds seeking work; continued rapid expansion in the demand for white-collar workers and technical personnel; the view of work as a means to an end; demand for liberal arts education; the rise of the cost of education. Community colleges have earned a prominent and permanent role in meeting the needs of a large segment of our society. (Author)

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRO-
DUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM
THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGIN-
ATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS
STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRE-
SENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Professional Paper
11-74
HumRRO-PP-11-74

HumRRO

ED 094825
JC 740 281

Will the Real Community College Stand Up!

David S. Bushnell
Human Resources Research Organization
Alexandria, Virginia

Mary Bach Kievit
Rutgers, The State University
New Brunswick, N.J.

HUMAN RESOURCES RESEARCH ORGANIZATION
300 North Washington Street • Alexandria, Virginia 22314

June 1974

Prefatory Note

This discussion of the role of community colleges within our society was published in *Change* magazine in an abbreviated version under the title, "Community Colleges, What is our Job?"

Mr. Bushnell is Director for Program Development of the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO). Mary Bach Kievit is Professor of Education, Graduate School of Education, Rutgers, The State University, New Brunswick, N.J.

WILL THE REAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE STAND UP!

David S. Busnhell
Mary Bach Kievit

INTRODUCTION

No other educational institution has been the focus of such optimistic pronouncements and radiant hopes as the public community college. For the past two decades, parents, local taxpayers, state officials, and most importantly, aspiring students have supported this American invention. The rate of proliferation has inspired the movement's more catholic supporters to label it the unique educational achievement of the 20th century. Less ardent supporters worry whether community colleges are the "coming slums of higher education." (1) Which of these observations is correct? Who is and who should be served by this type of institution are the concerns which prompted this inquiry.

As recently as 1960 Leland Medsker in his book *The Junior College: Progress and Prospect* (2) evidenced a concern for the lack of consensus among student, faculty, and administrators on the proper role of community colleges. Robert Hutchins in 1964 described the community college movement as "confused, confusing, and contradictory... it is generous, ignoble, bold, timid, naive, and optimistic. Its heart is in the right place, but its head does not work very well." (3) Since that time, however, there has been a dramatic upsurge in agreement among both critics and supporters on the role of the community college (in contrast with the sometimes agonizing debates among university and college communities on the goals which their institutions ought to serve).

Community college administrators, faculty, and students do agree on those goals that emphasize openness, meeting community needs, and serving the career interest of both the academic and the occupationally oriented students. Where differences do exist, it is a matter of priority. Top administrators are more concerned with responding to community needs; faculty place greater stress upon the student's personal development. Students tend to emphasize more egalitarian goals, like providing financial aid to any student who wants to enroll, regardless of his previous track record.

What is the role of community colleges within our pluralistic society? Are they second-rate institutions which serve to "cool-out" the less promising student, thereby preserving the status quo of the more elite four-year institutions? A recent study by Edmund J. Gleazer and the principal author of this article provides a fresh set of data. Key constituent groups—students, faculty, administrators, local community leaders, and state education representatives—were interviewed and surveyed during the winter and spring of 1971. The results of that study, reported recently in two volumes published by McGraw-Hill (4), confirm some already recognized trends. Other sources include recent statements by Cross, Karabel, and Corcoran. The role of community colleges in a pluralistic society will be described in terms of its contribution to an egalitarian society, its conveyance of social status, and its accessibility and responsiveness to the needs of adults in a changing ethos of work and leisure.

MYSTIQUE OF EQUAL ACCESS

As early as 1948, the Truman Commission on Higher Education noted the need for expanded educational opportunities beyond high school. Members of the Commission emphasized the fact that 49% of those conscripted for military duty had the capability (according to their scores on standardized achievement tests) to complete 14 or more years of education. The Commission concluded that "the time has come to make education through the 14th grade available in the same way that high school is now available." (5) Opening the doors of higher education to veterans and other candidates regardless of race, religion, or wealth was, at that time, a dramatic departure from the usual concept of selectivity.

The Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association (NEA) recommended in 1964 (6) that a tuition-free education for the first two years beyond high school be provided all students who seek it. It was their belief that low-cost post-secondary institutions would appeal to a broad cross-section of students—those who are uncertain of their future career interests, as well as those who know where they want to go but can not otherwise afford college. The accessibility of most community colleges makes it possible for 90% of the students now enrolled to commute or live off-campus while attending college.

Not all observers of the educational scene give the community college their unquestioning endorsement. Jencks and Reisman attribute the popularity of the community college not only to proximity and low cost, but to a backlash of lower middle-class parents who are concerned about the residential college and its liberal values. (7)

The selectivity of four-year colleges and universities has motivated parents and students from all walks of life to seek out other opportunities for education and training beyond the 12th grade, without the sacrifices and demands imposed by the more traditional institutions. The community college, according to Jencks and Reisman, appeals primarily to the marginal student of modest ability and uncertain career plans.

In addition to the growing recognition that post-secondary educational opportunities ought to be opened up to all who qualify, and the realization that many students, regardless of their socio-economic origins, qualify for at least a two-year Associate of Arts degree, the Civil Rights movement in the early 1960's demanded that post-secondary educational opportunities be opened to minorities. Massive federal, state, and local investments helped these "new" students in their quest for equal educational opportunities. The establishment of master plans at state levels, many patterned after California's Master Plan, introduced a number of new alternatives for the minority students to consider after completing high school. Federally guaranteed loans and Educational Opportunity Grants helped pave the way for students who might not otherwise be able to attend college.

While the financial support program has shortcomings, as findings of Project Focus demonstrate, minority enrollment in community colleges continues unabated. In 1971, for example, the increase in Black and Spanish-surname students in community colleges was approximately twice the total enrollment increase at public four-year colleges. This dramatic rise over the past few years had led at least one observer, Dr. Thomas Corcoran, to question whether or not the community colleges were the "coming slums of higher education." While it is certainly true that there is a higher degree of variability in backgrounds at public and private two-year colleges, there is no evidence that such students have lesser aspirations or are less motivated to achieve the benefits traditionally associated with college attendance.

The goals of an egalitarian society are more likely to be achieved if larger numbers of minority and low-income students are enrolled in community colleges and four-year

institutions. Expanded enrollment in one should not lead to a decrease in efforts to expand enrollment in the other. It can be inferred, from the data, that minority students move into community colleges with greater ease. This ease of entry, combined with educational achievement, contributes to one goal of an egalitarian society—equal opportunity.

IMPROVING STATUS

The role of community colleges in providing equal educational opportunity at the post-secondary level is now well established. The findings of Project Focus demonstrated that approximately 20% of all full-time students come from low-income families, as contrasted with about 12% in the four-year colleges. The median family income represented by students approximates that of the nation as a whole. Community college students are older and work more hours outside of college than students in four-year institutions. The average age of the part-time student is 29; an increasing number of these are women over the age of 35.

Not all of the students are from disadvantaged, or low socio-economic backgrounds. Twenty-five percent reported that they come from families whose earnings are in the neighborhood of $15,000 or more a year, and about one-third of the total student population are from families whose parents attended college. Eighty-six percent of the full-time students enrolled had attended a public high school.

Corcoran challenges the community college's ability to effectively serve the learning needs of those who attend. He makes the distinction between equal access to higher education and the distribution of educational benefits associated with achievement in higher education. If, for example, too many low-income students or minority students attend one type of institution, that institution may fall short of meeting the needs and providing the rewards associated with higher educational attainment.

This is Coleman's thesis that diversity in ethnic backgrounds provides its own rewards. Corcoran goes on to argue that equal educational opportunity depends not only on participation, but on learning options and adequate resources. He questions whether those who attend a community college have acquired the learning skills offered in the more traditional academic situation. Corcoran estimates pupil expenditures in community colleges to be about half of what is currently being expended on four-year college students.

Response to these concerns can take two forms: (a) What is the "output" of community colleges relative to the "input" of talent and resources, and (b) how do students feel about the experience? It will be our thesis that, in many community colleges, the quality of the learning experience is equal to, or even surpasses, that of many public four-year institutions.

Two recent studies tend to show that associate degree holders find jobs more quickly, are better paid, and advance more rapidly than graduates of either technical institutes or high-school level vocational programs. Both studies were based upon nationwide samples of full- and part-time community college students (8). Students who have dropped out before obtaining an AA degree, or have failed to transfer to a four-year college when it was their expectation to do so, do not do as well, according to follow-up studies. Only about 50% of those who first enter a community college obtain their AA degree (9). But of those who enter at the freshman year, 25% do transfer to a four-year college immediately upon completing their AA degree; about two-thirds of that group go on to earn a BA, or higher, degree. So, there is a good probability that the community college student who succeeds in transferring to a four-year college will obtain at least a BA degree.

It is reported by Cross that students in the community colleges, as well as those in state and private colleges in California, recognize the need to develop a commitment to lifelong, self-directed learning and problem-solving skills (10).

In turning to the question of how students feel about their community college experience, a study by Kievit (11) showed that students were more optimistic about achieving their expectations at the conclusion of their studies than they were in their freshmen year. Edwards and Tuckman (12) found that students entering a community college had lower self-esteem than their university counterparts; however, during their two years at a community college, self-esteem rose to the point where the difference was eliminated.

Students from more affluent backgrounds or with better-educated parents are often less certain about what career they want, and find the community college a place where they can exercise a number of options before committing themselves to jobs. Lower-income and/or minority students tend to see community colleges as a first rung in the ladder leading to increased earning power and higher social status.

Karabel (13) in a recent article in the *Harvard Educational Review* contends that a prime function of community colleges is to "cool out" students who aspire to a baccalaureate degree and the occupational status thought to follow. These students could never qualify for entry into the more elite colleges and universities because of their socio-economic position and lack of more conventional middle and upper middle-class social characteristics. The high attrition rates and the separation of students into academic and vocational tracks in community colleges screen out students, protecting the elitist orientation of four-year institutions. The students, thwarted in their achievement, must nevertheless believe that they have had ample opportunity to move into and through a post-secondary education program.

What Karabel and his fellow critics fail to see is that the effort required of the community college student in order to maintain his status and progress within the institution is not unlike the effort he will have to make once he enters the working world. Sacrifices and commitment, postponement of economic rewards, and the hard work required are very much like the effort required of anyone who seeks to advance in a chosen career. Those who are willing to take risks, are able to commit themselves to longer-term goals, and engage in self-directed behavior will, be better able to successfully cope with the community college experience than those who lack such characteristics.

Karabel questions the intrinsic merit of viewing the community college system as a causal factor in reversing a class system which has existed in this country (as in most other countries) for hundreds of years. We suggest that another perspective from which to view the function of the community college is to recognize that this emergent educational institution is serving the needs of a knowledge society, that is, it provides an opportunity for developing job skills, communication skills, and other badly needed coping skills to an increasingly larger number of persons and at a low cost. Simply attending a college institution (be it a community college or Harvard) conveys to the individual participant a sense of having improved his status over that of the high school graduate. The value of the community college experience is its contribution to the individual's achievement of a degree of economic security through enhancing his job skills, a broadening of his perspective and willingness to plan ahead and to anticipate future occupational shifts, and an ability to cope with the social and political problems of a rapidly changing, post-industrial society.

THE WORKING WORLD OF THE SEVENTIES

A third requirement served by the community college can be found in our national need for an up-to-date, increasingly sophisticated and trained labor force. The Bureau of

Labor Statistics (BLS) tells us that the outlook for those holding college degrees or vocational certificates is a promising one (14). The demand for clerical workers, technicians, and service workers of all types will continue to expand during the 1970s. Of the estimated four million job openings occurring each year during this decade, 40% will require some type of post-secondary education.

By 1980 some 100 million workers will be employed in the United States. Two-fifths of these, or 41 million new workers, will have entered the labor market during the decade. About 34 million of that group will be new, younger, workers seeking job opportunities for the first time. Another six million will be women who are seeking to re-enter the labor market at age 35 or beyond. The number of 25 to 34-year-olds in the labor market will grow by about 60% during the seventies, reflecting the movement of war babies from late adolescence to early adulthood (15). They will feel the pressure of competition from their younger colleagues. Competition among young adults seeking jobs for the first time, or older adults seeking to hold onto their jobs, will lead to increasing enrollment in upgrading or retraining programs.

The demand for white collar workers and technical personnel will continue to expand rapidly, particularly in service occupations, while the number of blue collar and production-oriented occupations will plateau or even decline. Implications for community colleges are that there will be many more young adults and even careerists seeking job training or upgrading opportunities in order to qualify for entry-level and higher-paying jobs. More part-time students, more mature and better-motivated students will result. Those in mid-career will be forced to seek out additional training or retraining in order to compete effectively with their better-educated younger collegues. Adult education programs in public high schools and through university extensions will provide some opportunities. Community colleges, however, with specialized facilities and curricula for technical education, will extend these opportunities considerably. All this will require community colleges to devise improved teaching methods, faculty attitudes, course scheduling, and credit assessment techniques, in order to accommodate the demands of the adult student.

Not only is the nature of work as it relates to education changing, but also the values associated with work. Daniel Bell (16) has characterized our current status as that of a post-industrial society. It has been a period of rapid expansion and consolidation of private business into larger organizations, with streamlined production techniques substituting machines for people. This continuing shift from human to mechanized production methods has resulted in increased leisure, early retirement, pressures to spread available work opportunities (particularly now that we are faced with absorbing burgeoning numbers of young adults into the labor market), and a continuing rise in the number of people employed in human service occupations.

Higher production enables us to compete with the products of foreign countries whose wage scales and standards of living do not yet match our own. To stay competitive, however, we must ensure that there is a continuing demand for the products of our automated production lines and mass marketing strategies, and that demand is aided by an ever-expanding labor force and spendable income. This, unfortunately, has already given rise to a dilemma in that automated production methods reduce the need for workers. A new kind of value system, that of a consumption-oriented society, has begun to emerge. Work is no longer an end in and of itself.

A consumption-oriented society requires leisure time, a commodity that has become increasingly available to larger sectors of the working population. Since 1960, the total number of weeks that workers spend on vacations has increased by more than 50%. The average length of a worker's vacation increased from approximately one week to two weeks between 1960 and 1969. Since 1960, all workers have gained about 50 hours a year in time free of work—30 hours from a reduction in the work week, 15 hours in

additional vacation, and four hours in additional paid holidays (17). This reduction in the number of hours worked, however, accounts for only a small fraction of the gain in productivity the economy has achieved since 1960. Productivity gains over the past two decades have averaged about 3% annually and are expected to continue at about that level throughout the remainder of this decade, according to the BLS. Thus, the amount of leisure time available will continue to grow at about the same rate as in the fifties and sixties. Since most workers preferred to divide their rewards between increased leisure and higher incomes, the gains in productivity during the seventies will probably be divided between shorter weeks and higher incomes.

Much of that leisure will continue to be expended in three areas: play, contemplation, and service to others. Older workers accustomed to the work ethic of the past will need to be assisted, through education, in shifting to a leisure ethic. Younger adults will want to develop work skills which will make it possible for them to serve others. Both groups will try to avoid "dehumanizing" work situations, with the result that many may search for jobs requiring higher levels of intellectual capabilities and post-secondary education. All these factors point to the rising demand for higher education today and in the immediate future.

One of the by-products of a consumption-oriented society has been the growing awareness of the dangers of polluting the environment, overtaxing our energy resources, and depleting our natural resources. A consumption orientation contradicts many of the assumptions which undergird the protection of our environment and the conservation of our natural resources. Contributing to the resolutions of such conflicts is one of the responsibilities of higher education.

The problems of conserving and developing new sources of energy, improving methods of transportation, increasing recreational facilities, providing better housing, renewing urban areas, and improving health and social welfare services creates economic demands on scarce state and local dollars. Additionally, the migratory habits of humans, and the changing ethnic, socio-economic, and age composition of the population have made communities increasingly complex. It is virtually impossible for anyone to know his community, and to be an effective, active citizen without making an educated, conscientious, and continuing effort to do so.

The community colleges, charged with the responsibility of meeting the community's educational needs, accept this responsibility. But support for community colleges and their expansion will only be obtained through successful competition with other social services. Rather than being detrimental, competition for limited resources at the state level may well be an additional impetus for linking community college programs more securely to critical community needs. This competition may force increasing numbers of state education authorities to revise master plans for higher education and recognize the need for additional fund-raising efforts at the local level. State personnel will continue to assume more and more responsibility for setting overall policies, determining the size of budgets, establishing district boundaries, deciding when and where new buildings will be built, and spelling out which long-range goals are to be served and by whom.

THE FUTURE ROLE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

The dilemma currently confronting the community colleges of this country can be neatly summed up in the following quote from the Newman *Report on Higher Education:*

> The public, and especially the four-year colleges, are shifting more and more responsibility onto the two-year colleges for undertaking the tougher tasks of higher education. Simultaneously, the problems

> we have already identified—the poor match of the student's style of learning and the institutions' style of teaching, the lock-step pressure to attend college directly after high school, the overemphasis on credentials—are overtaking the community colleges and rendering them ill-equipped to perform the immense task they have been given. (18)

While these are the issues confronting those responsible for making our community colleges work, there is increasing evidence that community colleges will continue to play a prominent role in facilitating the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial society.

What present-day forces already set in motion are likely to shape the future functions of community colleges? Here are some of these trends together with a brief prediction of their likely impact:

(1) The demand for equal educational opportunities will continue unabated. Disadvantaged and minority groups will argue for a more equitable distribution of resources, so that public education through the 14th year will become more and more a reality for all who want to take advantage of it.

(2) The movement of war babies from late adolescence to early adulthood is already presaging a sharp rise in the number of 20- to 35-year-olds seeking work. The shock of competition in the labor market of both the young adults and those in mid-career will force many to seek out additional occupational training as well as retraining for higher-level responsibilities.

(3) The demand for white collar workers and technical-level personnel will continue to expand rapidly, particularly in the service occupations, while a number of blue collar, production-oriented occupations will decline. More women will be seeking employment or opportunities to strengthen their occupational skills in order to re-enter the labor market once their children reach school age.

(4) The values associated with work are changing. Rather than being perceived as a measure of a man's personal worth, work is increasingly viewed as a means to an end. A consumption-oriented society, with its emphasis on high productivity and the automation of production methods, is leading to increased leisure and higher levels of income. More leisure, particularly among those in middle-level occupations, will create an increased demand for education and enrichment programs oriented towards strengthening one's avocational interests. Learning and creative self-expression are close corollaries of the desire to utilize one's leisure in a more rewarding fashion.

(5) The demand for liberal arts education, particularly among adults, will require increased flexibility and trained staff members who are capable of working with the mature student. Improved ways of articulating the various disciplines will be required to aid citizens in problem-solving and decision-making. Clustered courses and core curricula will help to eliminate the current separation of disciplines. Part-time enrollment, intermittent enrollment, and other forms of non-traditional study offer promising alternatives to the more conventional scheduling of courses.

(6) The rise in the cost of education, and its prominence as a budget item, will force state legislators and educational officials to carefully scrutinize budget requests and to seek additional sources of funding. The competition for scarce dollars among the various social services (environmental protection, expanded health services, expanded welfare programs, etc.) will force state educational authorities to establish or revise master plans for higher education, with emphasis upon utilizing already existing resources. Budget pressures will bring with them a rising concern for accountability and ways of measuring the output of our educational institutions.

In closing, let us observe that our capacity for creativity and innovation in this country has found one of its more noteworthy expressions in the creation of a nationwide network of community colleges. Demands for equal educational opportunities, social reforms, and individual self-awareness are being met through these institutions. While their ultimate impact is yet to be determined, they have already earned a prominent role in meeting the needs of a large segment of our society.

REFERENCES

1. Corcoran, Thomas B. "Community Colleges: The Coming Slums of Higher Education?" *Change Magazine*, September 1972.
2. Medsker, Leland. *The Junior College: Process and Prospect*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1960.
3. Hutchins, Robert M. Reported in article by Burt Schwartz, "Is It Really Higher Education?" *Saturday Review*, December 19, 1964.
4. Bushnell, David S. *Organizing for Change: New Priorities for Community Colleges*, Volume 1, Gleazer, Edmund J., Jr. *Project Focus: A Forecast Study of Community Colleges*, Volume 2, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1973 (Two-volume study).
5. President's Commission on Higher Education. *Higher Education for American Democracy*, Harper & Brothers, New York, vol. 1, 1947.
6. Educational Policies Commission. *Universal Opportunity for Education Beyond High School*, National Education Association, Washington, D.C., 1964.
7. Jencks, Christopher and Reisman, David. *The Academic Revolution*, Doubleday, Garden City, New York; 1968.
8. Godfrey, Elenore P. and Holmstrom, Engin I. *Study of Community Colleges and Vocational-Technical Centers, Phase I*, Bureau of Social Science Research, Washington, D.C., 1970. See Also: Somers, Gerald G. and Fernbach, Susan B. *An Analysis of the Economic Benefits of Vocational and Technical Education in the United States*, University of Wisconsin, Center for Studies in Vocational and Technical Education, Madison, Wis., 1970.
9. Astin, Alexander. "College Dropouts: A National Profile," *ACE Research Reports*, American Council on Education, Washington, D.C., vol. 7, no. 1, 1972.
10. Cross, K. Patricia. "New Students in the New World of Post-secondary Education," presented at the 28th National Conference on Higher Education, American Association for Higher Education, Chicago, March 1[illegible] 1973.
11. Kievit, Mary Bach. *A Comparison of Environmental Press and Selected Characteristics of Students at a Community College and Technical Institute*, Rutgers University, Department of Vocational-Technical Education, New Brunswick, N.J., May 1970.
12. Edwards, Keith J. and Tuckman, Bruce W. "The Effect of Differential College Experiences in Developing the Students' Self- and Occupational-Concepts: An Application of Discriminant Analysis with Longitudinal Data," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, vol. 63, no. 6, December 1972, pp. 563-571.
13. Karabel, Jerome. "Community Colleges and Social Stratification," *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 42, no. 4, November 1972.
14. Bureau of Labor Statistics. *College Educated Workers, 1968-80*, U.S. Department of Labor, 1970.
15. Bureau of Labor Statistics. *The U.S. Economy in 1980*, Bulletin 1673, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, D.C., 1970.

16. Bell, Daniel. *The Coming of the Post-Industrial Society*, Basic Books, New York, 1973.

17. Moore, Geoffrey H. and Hedges, Janice Neipert. "Trends in Labor and Leisure," *Monthly Labor Review*, February 1971.

18. Newman, Frank, *et al. Report on Higher Education*, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Washington, D.C., 1971.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

SEP 06 1974

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGE
INFORMATION